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ABSTRACT

This booklet is intended to serve as a guide for school superintendents, school board members, and school administrators in dealing with the problems of an enrollment decline. In their discussion, the authors outline some background, procedures, and considerations that may help administrators ease community and staff reaction to an enrollment decline. Separate chapters focus on the topics of enrollment prediction, school-community relations, personnel matters, and facilities utilization. Also included is a sample four-year time line of steps that administrators can take to prepare for an eventual school closing. (Author/JG)

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Declining Enrollment: What to Do

A Guide for School
Administrators to Meet the
Challenge of Declining Enrollment
and School Closings

Volume II

AASA Executive Handbook Series

American Association of School Administrators
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FOREWORD

For years America's school districts fought desperately to cope with mushrooming school enrollments. In the 1950s and 1960s a virtual tidal wave of youngsters entered the elementary and secondary schools of our nation, forcing many districts into frantic construction programs to provide suitable space for this enrollment boom. It was not unusual for districts to have two or three new buildings under construction simultaneously. Citizens were asked to approve record-setting construction bond issues to stretch the cost of these new facilities over 20 and 30 years.

Now, however, the enrollment boom is over. The U.S. Office of Education estimates that America's school population will decline by some five million pupils during the remainder of this decade and the early 1980s. While not all districts will experience this enrollment decline, many will. This has caused a new problem for school administrators — what to do about half-filled classrooms and buildings? How to redeploy staff? What to do with surplus space and facilities? What about citizen reaction to closing schools in their neighborhoods? What pressures will be brought to bear on the board of education members as a result of closing present facilities?

AASA was asked by many of its members to study this problem and provide assistance and guidelines to chief school administrators faced with this unique situation. The Association asked two knowledgeable educators to collaborate to produce this handbook to meet this need. This handbook has been written by Katherine E. Eisenberger, professor at William Paterson College, Wayne, N.J., and William F. Keough, superintendent of schools, Bedford, Mass. Credit is also due William E. Henry, Associate Secretary, for additional contributions in the preparation of this manuscript.

It is hoped that this publication, along with the 30-minute color sound filmstrip on this subject, will assist school administrators faced with declining enrollments to meet and conquer this new challenge.

Paul B. Salmon
Executive Secretary
AASA

Table of Contents

	Page
Foreword	ii
Introduction	v
Chapter 1. Enrollment Prediction	1
Chapter 2. School/Community	10
Chapter 3. Personnel	27
Chapter 4. Facilities	35
FOLD-OUT TIMETABLE	Center Spread

Appendix

Keough Indicator Survey Scale	43
Enrollment Prediction Chart	45
School Closing Checklist	48
Sample Staff Transfer Announcement	50
Early Retirement Incentive Program	52
Survey Questionnaire	54

This work represents Volume II in AASA's Executive Handbook Series to be produced in 1974 and 1975. Additional titles in this series are: Helping Administrators Negotiate (Vol. I); You and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act; Work Stoppage Strategies. All 1974 members of the American Association of School Administrators will receive copies of the 1974 titles as part of their membership.

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended to serve as a guide for school superintendents, school board members and general school administrators in dealing with the problems of enrollment decline. After decades of school expansion a dwindling school population has forced administrative attention to the problems of half-filled classrooms, under-utilized buildings and teacher surpluses. For most districts, the solutions to these problems focus around the recycling of school buildings. The questions many administrators are asking now are *How do you determine which school [schools] to close?* And, *What is the time line for school closings?*

For the reader who is just gathering purely academic information, we suggest a casual skimming and a filing away of this handbook against "Der Tag" when enrollment decline becomes a reality in your district. For those who have seen enrollment decline on the horizon, a careful reading of Chapter 1, *Enrollment Prediction*, and Chapter 2, *Community*, would be most helpful. If you are currently in the throes of shrinkage, we suggest a detailed study of the fold out time line first, and then a careful reading of all chapters.

There are no quick, mechanical and all-satisfying solutions to the problems posed by enrollment decline; we do not attempt to suggest that there are. Rather, it is the authors' attempt to outline some background, procedures, and considerations that may help to minimize community shock and that may assist in the effort to ease the raw nerve reaction of teachers and staff. In addition, an effort has been made to provide some experiences of other districts which may serve as possible guidelines for positive action in the future.

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Enrollment Prediction

Today, more than ever, school administrators are acutely aware of the need for proper long-range planning to meet the needs of education in cost-conscious communities. Without careful enrollment planning there can quickly emerge half-filled classrooms, surplus teachers, and needless expense. But when plans must be devised calling for projected school enrollments to warrant school capacity operating levels, the school administrator is confronted with another problem. How many children can be expected to attend a school in a particular location over the next five to ten year period? In other words, what is the school enrollment forecast? Up, or down?

Forecast methods are numerous and are known by a variety of names . . . percentage of retention, Cohort-Survival, and many others. While each method has merit, they are basically oriented toward live births and historical retention rates. In other words, they deal primarily with predictions of up to five years.

There is a simple do-it-yourself technique which can help to spotlight an enrollment decline trend long before the magic numbers will appear as statistically significant. The Keough Indicator Survey Scale requires the administrator to critically analyze his schools and community and to draw some conclusions based upon social, financial and residential factors. Some of the significant community indicators are found in answers to the following questions:

COMMUNITY:

- Is your community close to or bordering a metropolitan area?
- Did your community develop as a result of the population expansion within the metropolitan area?
- Is your community considered an advantaged area, with high-priced homes which are rapidly escalating in value?
- Does your community house a high percentage of professional people or older people whose homes fulfill their lifetime needs and whose children are now passing through or have passed through the local district schools?
- Have the service groups (YMCA, boys and girls clubs, church and temple social groups) been planning less emphasis on younger children due to an apparent lack of interest? Is the degree of interest really one of diminished numbers of elementary school children within the district and increasing adolescent numbers? In other words, has the emphasis shifted

to teenagers because they now outnumber other student age groups?

- If your community has a highly reputed school system in spite of high priced homes, will that good reputation still attract young families?
- Does your community have a high level of mobility with families moving in and out? (And who's moving in — families with children or retirees?)
- Are there pockets of middle income housing providing access to the district for young families and subsequently elementary school aged children?
- Is there available land for residential development?

If you answered "yes" to the first items and "no" to the remainder, these indicators can lead to an assumption that enrollment decline is coming. In addition there are further considerations that should be examined in connection with the schools themselves. These factors can be judged by looking at local schools in terms of the following questions:

SCHOOLS:

- Is there a disappearance of the problem of elementary classes which were three or four students beyond the school system's class size outer limits? Are the days gone when extra students in each class forced creation of a class on the stage, in the hall, cafeteria or gym?
- Is there growing evidence that elementary class size which once hovered at 27-30, has quietly slipped to 20-25, or even less?
- Are there statistics which show that total pupils at certain grade levels within some district elementary schools have begun to show a consistent decline over a two or three year period? For example, there may be considerably fewer fourth graders than seventh graders in the district, with gradual decline evident in the classes in between.
- Are there indications that pre-school census figures, previously quite reliable, now give cause for concern? Have suggestions been made to develop some form of computerizing the census process, conducting a mail census or telephone survey?
- Has feedback from local realtors revealed a marked decrease in the influx of families with pre-school children and in the arrival

of young marrieds who represent a potential source for pre-schoolers?

- Are there requests from elementary administrators seeking authority to convert unused classrooms into resource centers, special help areas, extensions of the classroom, or a "faculty smoking room", etc.

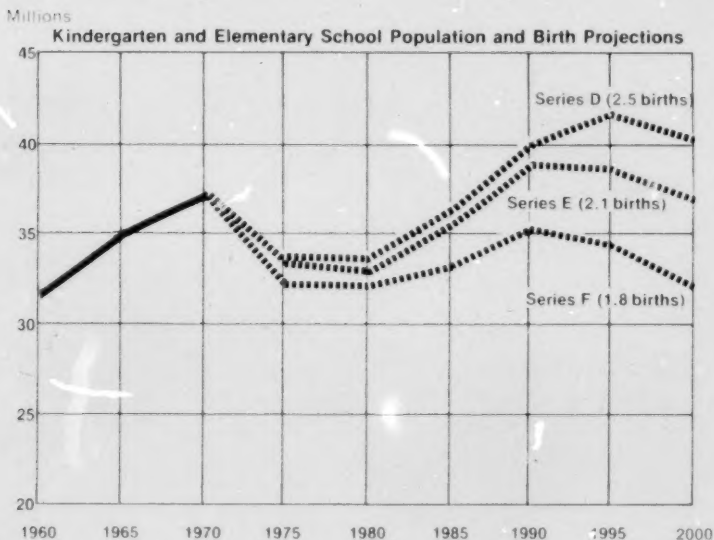
Yes answers to the above questions about the schools may well be cause for serious in-depth study of school district enrollment possibilities.

Enrollment estimates can be usually fairly well predicted up to five years from the present through the use of statistics on live births in any given year. Raw birth data will generally give a rough estimate of the number of children who will later come to school at five years of age.

When using raw birth data for enrollment prediction five years hence, in/out migration ratios should be also taken into consideration. How many of the children born five years ago are still in the community and are now attending kindergarten?

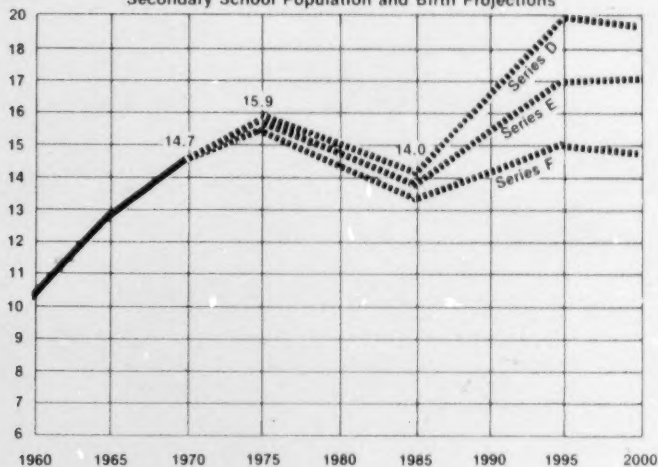
The Cohort Survival Technique estimates future enrollment by setting up a retention ratio of the number of children moving through the grades in previous years. For a more detailed discussion of Cohort Survival see appendix.

The accompanying graphs project births through the year 2000.



Millions

Secondary School Population and Birth Projections



In 1972, the U.S. Bureau of Census developed new Series population projections to reflect the declining level of births (Series D, E and F). Series D is a projection based on the assumption that there will be 2.5 births per family, Series E shows 2.1 births, and Series F depicts 1.8 births. Series D appears to be on the high side when compared to actual births in 1972; Series E, 2.1 births per family, was accurate for 1972.

What does all this mean in terms of school enrollment? If we follow the Series E projection which is currently on target, elementary school enrollment will continue downward through 1985. Even though the graph shows a birth increase in the years 1980-1985, it must be remembered that these children will not be in school for another five to six years. In terms of classrooms and teachers, there will be no increase seen until the late 1980's.

In secondary schools, this decline will be severely felt in the early 1980's and continue through to the 1990's.

While these projections indicate massive enrollment declines, other factors within each community may change these projections in that area.

Historical basis for retention ratios are derived from local conditions. Periods of growing ratios, when first year school children exceed the number of births five years earlier, should not be averaged with years of decline. This applies when districts attempt to set an average retention (birth to first grade) ratio over a multiple year period.

In the decade of the 1970's enrollment forecasting will be a tricky business. All the old projection methods are based upon "pure situation" ratios of children per home, births to grade one, and the

undergirding tenet that older families will move out, making way for younger families to move in.

Social, cultural, and economic changes have shot holes in the once reliable ratio techniques and basic tenets. Today's young families are producing fewer children per home. They are planning their parenthood, waiting longer and having fewer children. Older couples, skeptical of economic conditions, are not moving out of their homes. Even if they did, tight money would prohibit younger couples from buying in.

OTHER FACTORS:

Before making plans for expansion or contraction of schools, look for the possibility of *major shifts in residential building patterns*. An apartment complex of three and four bedrooms per unit will alter enrollment projections. On the other hand, single or two bedroom units will not appreciably change the enrollment picture.

Analyze *vacant land* and *possible building sites* for the number of dwelling units that could be built. Careful attention should be paid when using the method of projecting the yield from such sites by comparing it to the number of children from similar kinds of housing already in the area. Social and cultural factors operating in today's world *have lowered the ratio of children per family* from just a decade ago.

In Grove City, Ohio, a Columbus suburb, 1,000 new homes completed last summer would ordinarily have yielded 1,800 students. The total, however, was only 781.

Evaluate *employment trends* in the area as school enrollment may frequently be affected by industry moving in or out. Major industry layoffs can drastically decrease enrollments, while industry relocation and/or expansion can bring an in-migration; thus escalating enrollments.

It is important to know the *social-cultural background* and *age range of a community*, as they will provide added information for enrollment projection. As neighborhoods change and different socio-economic groups move in, houses may become multiple dwelling units and the population may increase four times over its previous level.

New highway construction may have two diametrically opposed effects. One, the elimination of homes in the construction path can result in lowered enrollments, or two, the connection of a lesser developed area to job centers bringing it within easy commuting accessibility thereby producing homes and children.

A prime example of the impact which a major highway system brings to outer metropolitan areas is the growth period immediately following the construction of Route 128, the circumferential highway built 15 miles from the center of Boston. The major portion

of this highway was completed in the early years of the 1950's; the period of major school building construction in the Route 128 towns parallels the expansion along the new beltway.

Similarly, within the past few years, a second ring perimeter highway was built 10 to 15 miles beyond the 128 belt. This new highway, Interstate 495, has linked formerly remote towns to the major industrial/business employment areas. The growth in these previously rural towns has skyrocketed and schools are still being planned and being built. This growth is not considered to be related to population expansion, but rather to the attempts of younger families to reach out to property not yet inflated by the times.

The accompanying map depicts suburban growth rings around the urban area. The communities bordering Route 128 are now feeling the impact of declining school enrollments. They have all the characteristics of "climax" communities (see chapter on Community). The second ring communities, building up along Interstate 495 are growing and expanding. These school districts are building schools and struggling with overcrowding.

In-depth study of the "sliced-out" area shows this most dramatically:

Areas of declining enrollment

Medford*
Belmont
Burlington
Waltham*
Lincoln*
Concord*
Bedford*
Sudbury*
Wayland*

Areas of growing enrollment

Acton
Boxboro
Billerica
Littleton

* These towns are currently accepting bussed inner city black students (METCO) in their available space schools. One way of holding off a school closing and reduction in force is to bus in students from urban areas.

Perhaps, one of the major influences then, in projecting pupil enrollment is proximity to urban area — first ring or second ring.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What simple prediction method is the most reliable today?

Answer: There is no "most reliable" prediction method. The best insurance is to use a variety of techniques to check and double-check each other. The Keough Indicator Survey Scale (KISS) should be used to begin any analysis.

2. Why will there be a continuing enrollment decline in view of the fact that the number of women of child-bearing age has increased?

Answer: The important factor is not the number of women of child bearing age (15-44 years), but whether or not these women, in actuality, bear children. The number of women has increased but the number of births has declined.

3. What is fertility rate and how has it changed?

Answer: Fertility rate is the ratio between the number of women of child bearing age and the number of births per thousand. In 1800, the number of births per 1,000 women was seven; or in other words, the average family had seven children. In 1970, the average family size was down to three children and is steadily dropping. In 1972, the figure was 2.1 children per family.

4. What is a demographic survey?

Answer: A demographic survey of the school district includes a thorough census of the population determining who the people are, their living conditions, how many there are, how they intend to use the land, their length of residency, the number of children per household by ages and grades, and the various kinds of dwelling units found in the district.

5. What are the advantages of a demographic survey?

Answer: By combining the information from a demographic survey with in and out migration rates, school attrition rates, and the number of live births it is possible to make enrollment projections beyond the conventional linear model. This type of information gives the forecaster the tools with which to project more accurately by "feeling the pulse" of the district.

6. What are the disadvantages of a demographic survey?

Answer: The two major disadvantages are costs and the time limitation on the utility of the data. The major costs will be for the personnel involved in planning, organizing, and administering.

ing the survey, processing the data and analyzing the results. Additional costs will include computer time and supplies. In regard to the time limitation on the utility of the data, unless supplemental surveys are conducted the lifetime of demographic data usually does not exceed five years. This time limitation may be considerably less in a rapidly changing community.

7. What kind of district would benefit most from a demographic survey?

Answer: In districts where enrollments are significantly fluctuating or are changing in a non-linear fashion, the benefits gained through a demographic survey will probably offset the cost involved.

8. What specific outside community factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating enrollment projections?

Answer: Transportation, movement of industry (in-out), change in zoning regulations, change in subdivisions regulations, change in government or military installations (opening or closing), urban renewal, subdivision of large land holdings (farms, estates), highway systems.

9. Will the Keough Indicator Survey Scale (KISS) predict enrollment figures?

Answer: The Keough Indicator Survey Scale (KISS) is an informal instrument designed to help administrators pinpoint community factors that have slowly developed in shrinking enrollment communities. It will predict trends, it will not yield numerical figures.

School/Community

INTRODUCTION

School building closings, while appearing to be a routine, statistics-based, economics/facility problem, will ultimately demand the utmost skill, care and effort in the area of human behavioral relations.

Administrators intuitively know that it is easier to build a school than to close one down. Building construction implies growth and expansion. A community's need for schools is a symbol of its youthfulness and vitality. In suburbia, when schools were being built, parents were young and on the threshold of their family lives. It was an era of promise and fulfillment in the goodness of the American way of life. School openings were events in which parents and teachers took pride. They developed a real proprietary and provincial interest in their *own* school.

Today, in these same communities, the closing of a school marks the passing of the years. Children have grown, and parents have lived through their younger years and are now approaching middle life, a fact many communities in mid-life crisis are reluctant to face.

In suburbia, these communities seem to have some common characteristics. They are relatively affluent, non-urban havens lying on the perimeter of Metropolis, USA. Over the past 25 years, rapid land-value escalation has produced high-priced homes which are, in today's market, financially out of reach for most young couples just starting domestic life. These communities have little land available for new development; most have been developed to capacity. Construction of middle or lower-middle income housing in these areas is not possible. The net result is a low mobility, middle-aged community with a low turnover of homes and few young families. Children have passed or are passing through schools which has resulted in a consistently declining school enrollment.

As these districts go into contraction and schools close, what will be the major concern of suburban superintendents? Employee contracts, reduction in force (RIF), buildings, budgets, and individual school geographic zones, will be time-consuming and enigmatic problems, but the major concern will have to be the people involved in school buildings closings -- parents, teachers, principals, children and the board of education. All have contributed in the past. All have a stake in the future.

PARENTS

Our schools hold a unique position in the American way of life. For decades, thousands of American housewives in communities across the country have looked toward the local school and school-related activity as an avenue for meaningful involvement. This purposeful participation with local school principals, teachers, and other mothers is not only the undergirding of our American educational system, but is also a primary source of personal need-fulfillment for the mother, who, during the family's early growth years, is all too frequently isolated from the adult world.

The staunchest school supporter and most zealous educational advocate is the parent who has spent long years building a good personal reputation in the local schools. This parent has, over the years, carved out a sphere of influence and general acceptance of herself and her school-age children. She has expended personal resources at P.T.A. functions and other school activities. She has volunteered in the classrooms and headed up the after-school activity clubs. She has provided an investment of time and effort while simultaneously reaping a harvest of fulfillment in terms of her psychological-emotional needs.

When parents view local school closings, what they see is the threat of losing this personal investment and having to begin all over again the process of building reputation, influence and acceptance in a new school. Once a tie with the local school is established it is difficult, at best, to sever it. Few parents will relinquish a solid position in their local school and willingly step out on the unknown grounds of a new arena without first putting up a fight.

When parents block rationally presented school closings they are not always fighting to save a building, they are sometimes trying to preserve a unique source of satisfaction and the results of their past efforts. An explanation of this can be found in the behavioral sciences. Sociologists long ago established that there exists a hierarchy of human needs and that these needs motivate people into action. Once the basic physiological requirements of food, shelter and safety have been satisfied, an individual's efforts then become focused upon more complex psychological-emotional needs. Included in this category is the need for good reputation, the need to influence and the need for basic acceptance.

CHILDREN

Children are affected by school closings in many ways. Like their parents and teachers, they too, will be apprehensive of the changes they will meet in the new building — the possibility of a new principal, the unknown teachers, and its "already-there" children.

Changes, too, in rules and routines — schedules and the “system”. They will need to “psyche out” this new system.

For children who have gone to school in their local neighborhood, the prospect of being transferred to another section can be intimidating. Frequently even when youngsters accept longer bus rides, anxious mothers can transmit concerns about being further away from home.

Transfer to another school may also separate long time friendships among children. “What if John, my best friend next door, isn’t in my class?” is a typical child concern.

TEACHERS

Just as parents and children are concerned and motivated by human needs, so are teachers. Teachers resist a school closing because it can mean the cold reality of the loss of jobs. It will mean that younger teachers will be the first to go. But that is only part of the problem. For those teachers who will be transferred, it will mean that they, like parents, will have to begin again to establish themselves in a new setting.

They will be concerned about their acceptance by the new neighborhood, their acceptance by the existing faculty and staff, and their acceptance by what will probably be a new principal. Most teachers build close personal friendships among their staff peers and these will be dissolved when the school is closed and the faculty dispersed to the remaining buildings.

While these concerns may appear inconsequential when one is viewing the problem of school closings from the district level, they are terribly important on the teacher level. They are important because they represent a major disruption of the comfortable and the known; because they demand new learnings and tests of self, and because they are all brought about through decisions made *for* the individual instead of *by* the individual.

PRINCIPAL

Principals and other administrators will not always be 100 percent behind a school closing effort. They have much to lose and little to gain. Principals may be losing all or part of a staff with which they have developed a working rapport, a staff which recognizes and acknowledges their sense of priorities in curriculum, building behavior and instructional style. In effect, they run the risk of having to create once again a reputation should they be the administrator transferred to new schools and new staffs.

Most threatening is the possibility of being an “excess principal.” Transfer to another building may cause principals to leave behind

unified and mostly supportive parent groups and student bodies that are known to them through their previous experiences with older brothers and sisters.

What will principals gain from a transfer? They will be assigned new responsibilities which will mean reams of paper work, reshuffling of materials and equipment, an unknown student body, faculty members that are new and possibly resistant to them and to each other, and an anxious and potentially critical parent group.

BOARDS

Parents, teachers, principals — all are affected by the need to establish and maintain a good reputation. Board members, in particular, expend considerable energies protecting the leadership positions they have built as public officials. The crucial test for board members is the very real and obvious public vote. Failure to gain re-election is a publicly stated loss of confidence in the board member's ability to deal with crucial issues affecting the school and community.

Consequently, when public issues represent a threat and may well signal the beginning of the end, school board members find themselves encountering increased harassment over the backyard fence, in the supermarket, in the office and at home. Such overwhelming public pressures may make school board members waiver during periods of critical decision making.

All of the above depicts the subtle, but realistic feelings of various school district subgroups. While hidden behavioral anxieties seldom surface as voiced concerns, they tend to add their weight to the burdens which build and collectively inhibit implementation of school closings.

Complex and sometimes conflicting community forces will demand different techniques depending on variables of time, past events in the district, population mix, and school board acceptance with both voters and faculty. Other school districts have been successful with their constituencies by using a variety of public information procedures. The most successful of these are described below.

COMMUNITY POLLS

Surveying the community through a voter-list mailed questionnaire, randomly-selected face-to-face interviews, or the use of telephone interviews offer direct channels of communication. The major advantage of community surveys is that they build rapport, they say to the community, "We are interested in your thoughts". Polls gather valuable data, and they also allow time for letting

people gradually become adjusted to some realities the school administrator lives with daily.

If any form of survey is used with the community at large, it is imperative that faculty, staff and students also be polled. Otherwise, it would be easy for this segment to assume that the superintendent and board are really only interested in the taxpayer and not with those most directly involved in the schools, that is, teachers, non-professionals and students.

COFFEE HOURS

Twenty years ago when the push was on to pass a bond issue for building the schools which are now being closed, superintendents, central office administrators, board members, principals and teachers were out in force attending coffee klatches with small groups throughout the community. Most successful bond issues were a direct result of the personal contacts made when school people got out into the community.

School people, "the insiders", are the chief sources of information about the schools for community members, "the outsiders". Outsiders know what the insiders tell them. The same push for "getting out into the community" is just as necessary now, if not more so. But now, a different and more difficult message is being conveyed.

When schools were being built the community was youthful, vibrant, and growing. People were on the threshold of their family lives. They were young and the need for schools was a symbol of this youth and vitality. Now, the exact reverse is true. The community has aged, has seen its children grow, and school closings are symbolic of the passing of a community's younger years.

A school closing says, in effect, "Our community's productive surge of youth is over and we are approaching the middle years". Reluctance to face this aging can be blamed, in part, on our country's youth culture orientation.

The message that must come through now is that while school buildings may not be needed for children, they are needed by the community for other, equally purposeful uses; and that while mid-life mothers are not needed for full time mothering, they are needed by the community in other human service areas. Administrators and boards need to fill this void for a mid-life crisis community with purposeful action alternatives. This can only be transmitted through personal contact. Of all the techniques available, the personal touch afforded through small group coffee sessions is the most effective.

VISITATIONS

The unknown is most threatening only when it remains unknown. The move for teachers and pupils from a comfortable, known school to one across town can be fraught with anxiety. This can be inevitable unless there have been previous experiences with this new school to help ease the move. Early in the planning stages of closing schools, teachers should be given an opportunity to visit the other schools in the district. To avoid the negative aspects of having teachers "check-out" a school after their announced transfers, these visitation opportunities can be constructed through a professional development exchange program among the district schools.

In some districts, long-range planning allowed for massive teacher exchange programs to have been instituted long before the issue of school closings was patently evident. Teachers on the same grade level exchanged places with their counterparts in other schools for a week or more or in some other way became acquainted with other principals as well as other parent and student groups.

In this way, they became familiar with other faculties, and began to build rapport and friendships outside their own schools. These beginnings often paved the way for the unavoidable transfer two years later.

Students, also, need to have natural opportunities to visit other schools in the district long before closings are announced. Whole class exchanges and interschool projects are ways of allowing students to see and be a part of, what may be in a relatively short time, their new school. While these visitation programs may be costly in terms of pupil transportation and scheduling now, they will be worth their weight in positive people feelings when the closing occurs and the child describes his new school to his parents by saying, "That new school wasn't so bad, I had fun there last year when we exchanged classes".

SIMULATION EXPERIENCES

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks facing school boards and administrators when dealing with school closings is determining where to begin and how to proceed. Unfortunately, they have only one chance at making the right decisions when the problem is upon them as a reality. When using a simulated experience or case study approach, however, they can decide and revise these decisions many times over.

A case study from another town allows board members and administrators to view the process dispassionately, to voice opinions without fear of constituent disapproval, and to move through problem-solving behaviors in concert.

Frequently boards are hampered in their efforts to work as a team because just as they begin to act together, members leave and new members come on. In addition, just at these times of turnover, they are forced to deal with highly-charged emotional items. These, and many other factors, often impede board solidarity. Simulations, however, provide an opportunity for a meshing of opinion in a relatively short period of time over an item from which personal involvement has been largely removed. Such an activity helps to lay the groundwork for unity and to develop a background of common experiences which will be needed to deal with the local problems of school closings as they arise.

TASK FORCES

The establishment of a Task Force of lay citizens as an advisory group is an essential ingredient of any school closing effort. In the confrontation over any issue, active parents with a strong point of view will surface and align themselves naturally. It is much wiser to seek them out from the beginning and help to guide their actions by providing accurate, up-to-date information, rather than to have them insisting upon a search through old board of education minutes for statistics which substantiate their own point of view and cast doubt upon seemingly arbitrary board action.

Task Forces provide a direct line into the community. They serve a school system best when they are given opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process. People tend to support what they had a hand in creating.

All too frequently and unfortunately, Task Forces are extensions of individual school board members' views. The success of any Task Force is contingent upon the open-mindedness of its members and their ability to analyze facts and make recommendations free of bias and unencumbered by public pressure.

A Task Force which is to examine possible school building closings must represent not only parents and geographic areas of the district but must include individuals with expertise in governmental, social service, commercial, real estate and other areas. If a school committee is to seek community advice, it must respect its responsibility to obtain the best advice available. Advisory groups which too readily provide consensus, prior to full examination of all facts and alternatives, simply serve to waste the time of administrators, school boards and the general public. A Task Force which is conscientious and demanding could well be a boon to a harassed board of education.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. In what order should these techniques be used?

Answer: The first step is to make sure that enrollment projections are reliable (see Chapter One). Once it has been established that decline will be a reality, the school board must be fully apprised of the situation and its ramifications. At this time it is necessary for the board and the superintendent to begin to set a plan of action. Simulation experiences or case studies of other districts who have gone through enrollment decline should be used.

If the PTA organization does not have a central council made up of each school's PTA President or representatives, the superintendent should encourage the formation of such a council. This central group could play an integral role in the superintendent's communications network in the years ahead. Astute administrators recognize the influence of this group's members and make every effort to gather its force under the district's umbrella. The superintendent who is well considered by the PTA has a great advantage in school-community relations, even in time of unpopular, difficult decisions.

At the same time, long before school closings are even considered, the administration should push for a district-wide professional development program of teacher visitations. The help of principals and teacher organization leaders should be enlisted to encourage this kind of teacher sharing and cooperation.

Most teachers will be eager to switch with their counterparts in other schools. This effort needs to be administratively supported in the form of *teacher time off for joint planning*. Not only will it accomplish the specific goals of exposure and familiarity with other buildings, but it will generate enthusiasm and a renewed interest in curriculum planning and design. The direct effects of visitation programs in teacher renewal and on education in general are so positive as to warrant its inclusion in every district's professional development program.

The above techniques should be implemented and well under way before the superintendent feels the need to move into small group coffee sessions. The purposes of meeting in coffee hours are to carefully disseminate the facts about enrollment decline, to firmly establish himself as a credible and concerned administrator, to securely fix open channels of communication and to assure a firsthand awareness of the feelings in the district.

As soon as the community has become fully aware of the declining enrollment problem and possible school closings, concerned interest groups will begin to clamor for attention. It is at this

moment, when unrest is just beginning, that the superintendent should announce the school board plan to survey the community. Timing is of the essence. If the announcement is made too soon, it will lose its impact. Adroitly timed, it will surface as a direct administrative action to meet community needs; if it is made too late, the unrest will have grown into mistrust and full scale rebellion.

During the weeks of community polling the superintendent should be gathering names of capable people who are interested in serving on the Task Force. Task Force members will evaluate poll data and make recommendations to the superintendent and board.

This simple time line touches only on community aspects, a more complete time line can be found in the fold-out section.

Accuracy of Projections Checked

Information Board Meetings

Simulation Experiences

Pian Set

PTA Council Formed

Visitation Program Implemented

Coffee Hours

Poll Announcement

Polls

Task Force Organization and Schedule

Task Force Report to Board

Board Hearings and/or Decision

2. How can the superintendent communicate school district needs?

Answer: Many districts have hired public relations specialists to help the superintendent and board outline a solid communications program. Effective communications are essential for the well-being of any leader. The costs of PR professionals are well spent in the long run. In fact, almost any size district today vitally needs a full-time, competent communicator to assist in the administrative management of the district.

3. How can the superintendent with a tight budget communicate school district needs?

Answer: Begin by outlining the types of media available: TV, radio, newspapers, newsletters, face to face, questionnaires, billboards. Evaluate the message and the media best suited to communicate that message. TV and radio — both forms provide opportunities for the superintendent or board members to communicate district concerns through interviews, forums,

or panel discussions. Since the target audience is parents, it is wise to include students. Superintendents should be cautious not to fall into the all too easy trap of delivering a lecture or monologue. Panel discussion of district priorities with student leaders is particularly effective.

Newspapers — probably the greatest source of district support can come from the local press. If the press is provided with an up-to-date honest account of events they will not need to resort to investigative reporting. Inform the press of your plans, hold off-the-record background briefings and work with them by giving personally of your time for special "private meetings." The press can be either your greatest ally or most destructive enemy — it is up to you to decide which.

Face-to-Face meetings — informal coffee hours allow for the give-and-take type of dialogue which contributes meaningfully to a real understanding of district needs. In small groups, administrators can explain details, clarify rumors, and build confidence through a personal rapport. One district has set aside a two month period during which all building administrators will work half of the day at school and be responsible for coffee hour meetings at night. This should not be attempted without careful administrator training sessions. Coffee hour communication techniques are learned skills; don't send out unprepared and untrained administrators. The result may be the opposite of what you expect or desire! Public meetings are another form of face-to-face communications. If it is designed to be a meeting for explanations with questions and answers be cautious; large groups do not lend themselves well to this type of communication. It would be wiser to run coffee hours first, then a public hearing.

Questionnaires — direct mail survey questionnaires can be designed not only to gather information, but also to disseminate it. Carefully phrased questions can suggest the ways in which the district is moving; and can obtain feedback on these plans. Questionnaires can also help to pinpoint exactly what the community does and does not understand, thus allowing the district to concentrate its efforts into explaining what the community doesn't understand.

Newsletters — newsletters are regular fare in most districts. For important messages a special issue should be constructed using a different color paper and print and a unique format. It should stand out as a "special issue."

Theater Marquees — some districts have utilized friendships with theater owners and hotel/motel managers who, in their

desire to display community sensitivity, have provided access to available space marquees. Managers of off-season drive-in theaters may also provide marquee availability.

Billboards — this technique has been successfully employed by big business for years. It is not outlandish for a multi-million dollar school system to take on the communications techniques of other multi-million dollar operations.

4. Who should be on the Task Force?

Answer: Members of the Task Force should include a cross-section of citizens in the community who have awareness of neighborhood and community interests and concerns; furthermore, members of this Task Force should be citizens with not only an interest but stake in guaranteeing community cohesion in difficult times. Efforts should be made to include representatives of business community, legal profession, labor unions, municipal government, teachers organization, principals, leaders of the parent-teacher association, real estate brokers, religious organizations, representatives of citizen and civic improvement associations and citizens who through their unique daily contacts talk to literally hundreds of other citizens in providing community service concerns (gas station operators, appliance repairmen, policemen, sanitation workers).

5. Should members of the Task Force be appointed?

Answer: To avoid a rubber stamp committee of the school board, it is recommended that while some members of the Task Force should be appointed, the majority should be composed of individuals who have volunteered their services and whose record for service in the community is reputable.

Whenever a public issue of conflict arises, citizen leadership will emerge on all sides of the issue; it is more prudent to include such leadership within a recognized and regularly formed group that will have access to factual information rather than allowing them to feel the need to rely on multiple outside sources which may sometimes be unreliable.

6. Should the Task Force be given a specific charge?

Answer: The Task Force should be given a specific charge, clearly defined, rather than be asked to study nebulous areas not necessarily associated with the final decision. See Task Force Survey in Appendix.

7. Who should conduct Task Force meetings?

Answer: The Task Force should receive guidance and data

from the school administration and from the board of education. However, the membership of the Task Force should determine the process of operation which it will employ as well as the leadership it will follow.

8. Who should conduct coffee hours in the community?

Answer: In the larger suburban and urban school districts it is not feasible for the superintendent of schools, himself, to plan on taking a major role in the community and neighborhood coffee hours program. The most valuable resources available to the superintendent are the building administrators. These administrators, when carefully briefed, provide invaluable communication services for the superintendent and the community.

In smaller, suburban districts, the superintendent of schools should be available for a community coffee hour program.

In urban and large suburban areas, members of the board of education can also be most helpful in visitations in coffee sessions with business leaders. In smaller suburban areas, where school board members sometimes assume a more prominent role in the community, members of the board of education can become participants in coffee sessions, not only for business leaders but also for the neighborhoods.

In all circumstances the superintendent of schools needs to meet continuously with building administrators and board members who may be serving in a coffee hour program. As the community information process accelerates, the superintendent will need to guarantee a continual updating for principals and school board members. As more data becomes available it becomes most important that these individuals be kept fully informed.

9. Where in the community should coffee hours be held?

Answer: Coffee hours can be held just about anywhere in the community where a social gathering can take place. They may be assembled in the kitchens and living rooms of PTA leaders; they may be held in the social rooms of churches, they may even be held in the eating rooms of senior citizen projects or school cafeterias. Every attempt should be made during such coffee sessions to insure that the groups pulled together are small and intimate and not so large that interaction is impossible.

10. What steps should be taken before instituting a faculty inter-school visitation program?

Answer: Every attempt has to be made to enlist principal support. Without principal support inter-school visitation pro-

grams will not produce the desired results. Principals should encourage such exchanges and put administrative effort behind organizing the program in such a way as to make its operation easily facilitated. Teacher time off for joint planning, follow-up sessions, and materials exchange should be provided.

11. What method of polling yields the most reliable results?

Answer: Research has shown that face-to-face interviews by professional pollsters are the most reliable form of survey.

12. If professional pollsters are not available, can volunteers and non-professionals conduct face-to-face interviews?

Answer: The face-to-face technique, when used by volunteers or non-professionals, can produce a statistically valid survey. However, careful training should be given to those who will do the interviewing. People tend to say what they believe people want to hear, and non-professionals need to become adept in hiding their own points of view.

13. Suppose the district cannot afford professional pollsters?

Answer: An alternative is telephone interviews. They are quick, economical, and offer the opportunity to get detailed answers to open-ended type questions that could not have been asked in a mailed questionnaire.

14. Who should conduct telephone interviews?

Answer: Telephone interviews can be conducted by volunteers if they have received training beforehand.

15. What about mailed questionnaires?

Answer: The quickest and easiest type of polling is the mailed questionnaire. The use of mailed questionnaires can be considered representative only if 80 percent or better are returned. Telephone follow-ups, second mailings spaced a week apart, use of colored paper, and self-mailers are some additions which seem to produce a high return of questionnaires.

16. Should everyone in the community receive a mailed questionnaire?

Answer: Not only should questionnaires be mailed to the general voter list, but school personnel, faculty and staff should receive an opportunity to respond also to a mailed questionnaire.

17. Who should design a mailed questionnaire?

Answer: When district funds allow the use of professional questionnaire designers, the use of such professionals should be employed.

18. If the district cannot afford a professional questionnaire designer, what general guidelines should be followed?

Answer: In questionnaire construction, the reasons for conducting the survey should be clearly identified. An outline of the problems to be solved and the questions to be answered should provide a solid foundation for survey construction. Careful consideration needs to be given to the order of questions; initial questions should be designed in such a way that they will not appear to be too specific, irrelevant, or threatening to the respondent. Begin with general non-emotional questions and move to the target areas logically and in sequential order. A commonly used approach is to start with the past, move to the present, and then to the future.

The questions themselves may be either "closed" or "open".

The National School Public Relations Association (1973) notes that the "right" questions are those that produce the information sought. "They are readily understood, logically sequenced, and there are just enough of them to direct the board and administration into a course of action they intend to take." The association offers a number of practical suggestions, including the following pointers: avoid negative questions; do not assume the public knows what is being talked about; skip questions that can be answered without surveying, especially if they might put the respondent on the defensive. Avoid "iffy" questions. Do not slant questions to produce favorable answers. Do not use the survey as a sales program. Phrase the questions clearly, avoid jargon and keep sentences short. Keep the survey short to avoid being overwhelmed by the data.

19. How and why do you build information into a questionnaire?

Answer: Information can be built into a questionnaire so that it will serve not only for input but also for community education. One technique is to provide clarifying statements before asking a question. For example, if you are interested in having the community gain information about a year-round school plan, the technique would be to precede the question with a brief statement about such a plan.

20. What steps should be taken before polling the community?

Answer: Prior to any poll of the community, the community

should be informed of the purpose of the survey. In addition to this, the organization doing the polling should establish a very specific system for collection of the material, for organization of the material, for maximum utilization and for dissemination of the results.

21. Who should run public meetings?

Answer: The sponsoring agency should take primary responsibility for the organization and operation of public meetings. If the Task Force is having a public hearing in any particular section of town for information gathering purposes, the chairman of the Task Force should be in charge of the meeting.

Should there be a public meeting, sponsored by the board of education, for the purpose of either hearing a report of the Task Force or hearing from citizens, the chairman of the board of education should conduct the meeting. During such meetings the superintendent of schools generally lends assistance in terms of clarification and further information sharing and for calling upon members of the administrative staff who may be in the position to further explain any complexities dealing with their administrative specialties. For example, the assistant superintendent for finance or the assistant superintendent for instruction may be required to answer specific concerns dealing with their fields.

22. How do you provide for PTA leaders who are anxious over the loss of personal involvement in the new school?

Answer: Before the actual phase out of a school building, the parent leaders of that building should be given an opportunity to meet and plan with the parent leaders of the receiving building. The formation of central PTA councils is one way of providing for such introduction. Building principals are in the best position to bring about joint planning for the coming school year between parent leaders.

23. How do you ease student anxiety about the move to the new building?

Answer: Building principals of the receiving and phased out building or buildings are in the best position to alleviate students concerns. They can provide floor plans of the new building, listing of student rules, listings of schedules, and ease the transition through visitation programs. Issues of the student newspaper from the receiving building should be given to transferring students ahead of time. The newspaper may include background biographies on the students, biographies on

the teachers and some general information about student activities, clubs and programs in the new school.

24. What do parents worry about?

Answer: Loss of involvement in their local school. Loss of established reputation, ability to influence, and personal acceptance. Concerns for their children will be phrased by the following questions:

Does the new school offer a comparable or even better educational program?

Will my child have a longer bus ride?

If my child is ill during the school day, what provision will be made for transporting him home?

Will the "already-there" students be favored by the teachers and principal?

Will there be the same or similar social, ethnic, racial mix?

Is the lunch program similar?

Does the new school offer after-class activity programs; if so, is there a late bus?

Will this school offer the same extras — assembly programs, extra curricular activities, art, music, etc.

If my child is a "walker" will he or she have to cross any major physical barriers (main arteries, railroad tracks)?

These questions typify parent concerns — expect them!

25. What do teachers worry about?

Answer: Loss of jobs.

Loss of established reputation, influence, personal acceptance which has been built over the years in the old school.

Acceptance of themselves, their teaching style, and special abilities by a new principal, new faculty and new community.

The necessity of having to "psyche out" a new system.

26. What do principals worry about?

Answer: Loss of jobs.

Loss of staff with which they have built a working rapport.

Loss of community acceptance.

The necessity of beginning all over again to build reputation, influence and acceptance with a new faculty and community.

The necessity of learning to work with new parents and a new student body.

The necessity of having to establish themselves again as a "good" principal.

27. What do students worry about?

Answer: Unknown teachers and principals.

Unknown school and neighborhood.

Possible adjustment to a long bus ride.

Possible non-neighborhood children in class.

Loss of "reputation" gained for family by mothers and older brothers and sisters.

28. What do board members worry about?

Answer: Heavy amounts of pressure from "moving" areas with loss of credibility unless there is public understanding.

New challenges to their leadership from discontented parent groups.

Possibility of re-election defeat.

Need to become familiar with new parents if the school board member has been elected from a precinct or ward and children are transferred across these political lines.

The possibility of having a well-established school board reputation shattered due to emotionalism.

SCHOOL CLOSING TIMELINE

YEAR ONE

(A-ANNUAL)

September to January

February to June

PUPIL PREDICTION	KISS (page 43) (A) Demographic study (A) Cohort Survival Study Pre-school Census (A) Birth rate data (A)	Check Pre-school census against actual Kindergarten registration	Revis
OPERATION A N D	Request staffing studies in terms of influence on salary and benefit programs of: possible retirements probationary teachers tenured teachers Establish/review record system for building operation/fixed cost analysis District-wide curriculum coordination sur- vey by teacher/administration committee Begin analysis of transportation costs Request in/out migration report system from principals (A) (due in June)		Begin Revis Rev. com Dete Com
FACILITIES	Request building by building figures on Capital Improvements due to renovation or required safety measures Comparison of building locations and student residential patterns Establish regular contact with commercial/ residential realtors	Internal Estimates Capital Costs for 5 yrs.	Cap Revis uni Dete
COMMUNITY AND PERSONNEL	Briefing of central administrators/ principals Formulate initial plan of action with School Board		Set-u
MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS	Check for proposed municipal gov't building needs Check with Housing/Zoning Officials for future change in regulations Check with Municipal Development for possible Industrial expansion Check State/local highway develop- ment plans		
MEDIA		Issue media story on kindergarten enrollments	Anno Urge Urge Cer

SCHOOL CLOSING

YEAR TWO

September to January

February to June

Review C-S Ratios, watch +/- trends		
Initiate visitations program Review staffing/retirement plans Review record system, establish initial comparative studies Determine areas for coordination improvement Compare Transportation costs by neighborhood	Continue visitation program Moratorium on leaves Set a plan for curriculum coordination and present to School Board for adoption Simulation studies, various closing plans	Information Continued Analysis Report Implementation Coordination Results
Capital costs Estimates from Professional Staff Review residential patterns, students per housing unit (density by neighborhood school district) Determine Land/home purchase rates/turnover	Initial School Board review of capital costs Determine trends Prepare initial report for School Board	School Program Final Decision
Support PTA Central Council		September Conference
Initiate visitation program TV coverage in buildings. PTA to hold News Conference on New Central Council.	Background briefing for news media on all aspects to date.	Information News Issues Letter Issues News

TIMELINE

YEAR THREE

September to January

February to June

m district staff of problem (RIF) inue visitation program yze two year cost comparisons ort to Bd. of Educ. ementation of district-wide curriculum rdination lts to Bd. of Educ.		Comparisions used by School Board for final decision making.			
ol Board priorities set for capital costs gram l results to School Board prior to ision-making		Final decisions Capital Cost			
to Nov. ee hours	Nov. to Jan. Announce community survey Announce Task Force formulation Request for Task Force volunteers Survey community	Feb. Poll results Public Hearings Coffee Hours	April Task Force Recommenda- tions	May Board Decision	
rm local ws Media staff News- er e Community wletter	Hold news conference on Community Survey Announce Task Force formulation	Feb. Hold News Con- ference on Survey Data Invite News Media to public hearings	April Hold news conference on Task Force recommen- dations	May Hold news conference on official School Board action	

YEAR FOUR

September to January

February to June

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Personnel

The process of closing schools is best described as a potential people problem. The individuals most immediately affected by a dwindling school enrollment are teachers. As the number of children are reduced, so is the need for teachers.

REDUCTION IN FORCE [RIF]

As enrollments decline teachers face the possibilities of transfer or job elimination. In transfer situations there are many areas of teacher concerns.

Students of business management know that in any office or corporate organization it is most frequently the people with whom one works and the friendships one makes that determine how happy and satisfied an individual is with a job. It is no different for teachers. If peer acceptance is an ingredient for job satisfaction, the possibility of losing it and the need to build it again are not only major causes for dissatisfaction and uneasiness, but pose very poignant threats on a human-needs level.

An additional area of teacher concern is daily routine living within a school. Each school has a climate and set of operating procedures that is unique. Climate is an intangible atmosphere which is the result of daily interaction of principal, teachers, staff and pupils. The operating procedures, while usually in keeping with the overall district regulations, are different from school to school. These subtle changes are the result of the gentle bending of rules over the years to meet the personalities of the people using the procedures.

Obtaining custodial help in one school within the same district may require a form filled out in triplicate, while in another, it is as easy as a call or oral request. Securing extra supplies may be as formal as a written requisition or as casual as a child carrying a note to the secretary. Cafeteria workers in one school may fill special teacher requests, while in another they serve only the standard menu. Whichever way it is, that system is known and comfortable to the teachers operating within it. A move to another school means being thrust into an alien system with a new set of operating procedures to which to adapt.

Teacher reduction is agonizing for the superintendent. It means that the superintendent will have to say to the newest and usually the youngest on the staff, "You were a good teacher, the children love you, but I'm sorry, the numbers say we don't need you anymore." In

most cases, these newly-hired young people are excellent teachers. But because of order of employment they will be unable to remain. From a teacher point of view, teachers say, "order of employment reduction means that it really doesn't matter if you are a good teacher or not; it really doesn't matter if the kids hate you and you're really weak, as long as you were hired enough years ago — you'll have a job."

Teacher reduction also means "support letters" written by parents trying to help; telephone calls from old friends trying to persuade the superintendent not to cut a niece or a friend's son. Principals will comment, "But he's the best teacher I've got — can't you do something?"

An additional problem created by the order of employment reduction in force is the dramatic loss of minority group teachers. Most districts tried to equalize minority and ethnic teacher/children ratios only within recent years. Order of employment (RIF) will automatically wipe out these teachers first.

Some districts are faced with court-mandated minority hiring requirements. Legislative demands call for the introduction of new staff members from minority groups to better resemble the student population in the district. This task is expected to be carried out even in the face of declining enrollments.

NEGOTIATIONS

Along with proposed teacher reduction will come teacher organization demands for job security. Negotiations will no longer stalemate on the salary item; job security will be the new "non-negotiable" demand. Security-conscious teacher organizations have already negotiated contracts which call for excess area teachers to be kept on and retrained for new teaching assignments at district expense.

Some New York district teachers have won contracts calling for an agreement that prohibits the excessing of tenured or non-tenured teachers for the duration of the two year contract. Similarly, another contract provides that, if programs are cut back or ended, the affected teachers would be shifted to other positions in the district or hired as permanent substitutes.

ALTERNATIVE TO RIF

To avoid these enigmatic situations some districts have tried to deal with RIF in other ways. One effort is Early Retirement Incentive Programs (ERIP) (See Appendix). ERIP attempts to encourage

those teachers at the top of the salary scale to accept partial retirement.

Regardless of what technique is used or whatever efforts are employed — RIF is a reality; and to meet the needs of this reality years-ahead advance planning is necessary. To drop 80 or 100 excess teachers in one year is to invite massacre by the press, outrage by the community, and never-to-be-healed wounds in the superintendent's credibility.

PRINCIPALS

In the early stages of enrollment decline building principals need to be briefed and brought-in on planning meetings. In many cases, the principal is the first person to spot dwindling enrollments.

While the principal will have many personal concerns (see Chapter 2, Community) in regard to school closings, the principal will play a vital role in all the phases of a district-wide contraction effort. The principal will need to provide:

- Up-to-date enrollment figures
- Actual and projected maintenance costs
- Actual and projected capital costs
- Anticipated retirements from the building
- Anticipated staffing needs/cuts
- In/out migration ratios

Because of front-line contacts with parents, teachers and children, the principal will be in a position to set the stage for positive understanding of the declining enrollment problem. The principal may be responsible for coffee hours in the neighborhood, for preparation of teachers in possible job loss situations, and for easing student anxiety over possible building changes.

PARAPROFESSIONALS

In school consolidation, need for paraprofessional staff is greatly reduced. In some areas, paraprofessional organization contract requirements demand carefully adhered to guidelines for RIF. In other areas of the country, where paraprofessionals are largely not members of a bargaining unit, RIF is usually accomplished on the basis of seniority. Administrators who anticipate a phasing-out in the near future, should give careful attention to the collective bargaining agreements entered into with paraprofessional organization.

The same would also be true in working with employee contracts of custodian/cafeteria/maintenance workers/secretaries.

It is obvious that new job placements cannot be created to always accommodate specific service employees.

CURRICULUM COORDINATION [SUPERVISORS]

School closing and the reassignment of students and teachers bring about the need for curriculum and materials coordination. Instructional program continuity must be a priority item in advance planning. Subject area supervisors should be charged with the responsibility of insuring that comparable programs and materials exist from one school to another across the district. Of primary importance is the necessity to show parents that equal or even improved educational programs are available for the transferred youngsters.

One of the most time consuming and laborious tasks necessary in any district is conducting equipment and material inventories. In a shrinking enrollment district accurate inventories will play an integral role for both budget considerations and program continuity planning. Curriculum supervisors need to set up detailed inventories of teaching materials and equipment.

SUPERINTENDENTS

As already noted throughout this handbook, school closings are first and foremost people problems. For this reason, the superintendent needs to focus attention to, first, the alleviation of personal anxieties within the system, and secondly, within the community. Principals and teachers deal directly with the community at large. Before they can be effectively supportive of district plans, they must feel that the superintendent is conscious of and actively engaged in efforts to protect their welfare.

Administrators need to know "what is happening" and to be given an opportunity to offer input. Teachers should "hear it first" from the superintendent, not through the grapevine. As events unfold (committee formations, excessments, polls, task force recommendations, etc.) the administrators and faculty should always be the first informed. All district-wide personnel should receive personal communiques spelling out the problems and alternatives. (See Appendix)

In working with the community, the techniques described in Chapter 2, *Community*, should be helpful.

There is no need to spell out guidelines for working with the board of education. Each superintendent will have developed a style and appropriate technique, but one word of caution: If ever there was a situation which produces board member pressure and anxiety, school closing is it!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What specific steps should be used by the assistant superintendent for personnel in matters of RIF?*

Answer: Rank employees in order of seniority.

Consult with legal counsel for specific wording of written notices to ensure that all the legal technicalities and notification deadlines will be met. (See Appendix.)

It is usually considerate to include some less formal message within the body of the letter.

Hold a preliminary meeting with possibly-affected teachers.

Issue letters informing teachers that they *may* be excessed within the coming year (registered mail).

Issue letters informing teachers that they *will* be excessed (registered mail).

*Seniority, alone, is not the only consideration in many states. Personnel holding certificates in other areas and considered competent in that area may supersede senior teachers in that area. Check state and local laws.

2. What if two or more teachers were employed at the same time?

Answer: In this case some districts have held drawings to establish seniority. If a lottery is to be used, the following guidelines are suggested:

Hold drawing early in school year.

Conduct drawing with an auditor and teacher organization representative present to witness the proceedings.

Do not allow teachers to personally draw numbers from the lottery (this causes unnecessary anxiety).

Request witnesses to sign consent statement upon completion of drawing.

3. What is an alternative to RIF?

Answer: ERIP. (See Appendix.)

In today's tight-money market, there are just so many times the district can financially afford to reduce the teacher/pupil ratio. The only other alternative is to bring in more students. Some of the out-lying suburban districts of Boston have opted to bus inner city children. This is one of the country's few voluntary metropolitan integration plans (METCO). Inner city children are transported to participating school districts which accept them on a space available basis.

4. What can a district do to help well qualified excessed teachers?

Answer: Many districts send listings of the teachers they are

laying off along with their qualifications and recommendations to neighboring districts.

5. What are alternatives to administrator RIF?

Answer: Some districts have used excessed building administrators in one to two year consultant positions. In one district, an excessed administrator was reassigned as a RIF coordinator.

6. What is the role of the principal in school closings?

Answer: Elementary school principals are often the least used but probably most valuable resource of the district. Principals frequently operate on the "outer fringes" of central office so most teachers do not regard them as "the administration"; likewise, they are not considered part of the teaching ranks by central office so most chief administrators do not regard them as "the teachers." The unique position held is that of middle manager and therefore acceptable to everybody. Usually principals know and enjoy good relationships with parents and community — frequently a much closer contact than any other person in the district. Remember, superintendents may come and go, but the elementary principal stays. All these make the elementary principal of unparalleled value in community/school relations — especially school closings.

7. What can the superintendent do to help elementary principals during school closing efforts?

Answer: Principals should be fully briefed as to the needs of the district years before a school closing is a reality; and continued briefing as events unfold.

Principals should be provided with a direct channel for input and play an integral role in the planning. They both want and need to be involved in the decision-making process.

They will need to be sensitized to the emotional/psychological concerns of teachers and community.

They will need special "briefing sessions" if they are going to be responsible for conducting coffee hours in community or public meetings at school.

They will need to be given support materials (newsletters, questionnaires) if they are to act effectively in the community.

8. What suggestions can be offered to plan for RIF?

Answer: A moratorium on leave policies will reduce the number of teachers returning to claim positions vacated at higher enrollment levels. Offer only one or two year termination contracts to new teachers (some States prohibit this policy).

Institute ERIIP (See Appendix)

Institute staffing needs studies before going into contract negotiations which may call for job security items in the new contract.

Prepare the community and staff for possible teacher reduction (See Chapter 2, Community).

Request that teachers planning to retire or leave the district file such intention at least a year in advance whenever possible.

9. What can subject area supervisors do to provide for program continuity?

Answer: Some districts have required student program record cards for each student in the district. These cards list the materials the child has used and the progress achieved. When the child moves to a new school the program card will move with him.

Every attempt should be made to move materials and teachers to the same new school as the child.

Feed-in transitional programs should be instituted when similar reading or math programs do not exist in the new school.

10. What specific guidelines for inventory should be instituted?

Answer: New inventory forms should be developed. These forms should provide for other than simple numbers recording — columns for out-dated materials slated for disposal, columns for ultimate destination of materials. In addition, guidelines indicating what constitutes school material and what can be termed teacher-held material need to be clearly delineated. This is a highly charged item for teachers. When teachers have used the same textbook manual for years, when they have written in the margins, when they have scribbled in little teaching notes to themselves, they come to regard these materials as "theirs." They will not give them up to be packed in a box and carried off to a new school. While these materials (text manuals, flannel boards, cuisinaire rods) belong to the district, they are a part of the basic teaching resources without which the teachers feel they can not teach effectively.

To avoid the separation of teacher and "special" materials a Special Inventory Form should be provided. The materials listed on this form will be kept by the teacher, but recorded for inventory/purchasing needs.

11. How can school districts keep job security from becoming a negotiations issue?

Answer: Keeping difficult issues off the negotiations table is the responsibility of the school district negotiator. Be the negotiator

an outside attorney, a professional negotiator, a school administrator, or a member of the school board, the main function will be to determine those items which are considered non-negotiable. Items which protect the control over the school system operations are essentially the domain of the school board and administration. More and more, however, any and all items which are related to the operations of schools are becoming negotiable. A firm position in this particular matter of job security, along with community understanding, will be necessary.

12. How can school districts prepare for the possible "public outcry" which will accompany the release of young staff who are well liked by parents?

Answer: Only an extensive public information program, one which keeps all citizens notified of the circumstances involved, will guarantee that a school district will enjoy a sympathetic ear from its community when younger staff members are forced out of their positions.

Facilities

Any discussion of facilities must be prefaced by comments on costs and funding. Of all the problems facing administrators dealing with shrinking enrollments, financial constraints are the most debilitating in terms of educational programs and facilities.

FUNDING

Revenue to operate schools come from local taxation, state appropriations and federal monies. Declining enrollments generally mean a decrease in state support, based on ADA or ADM, an expectancy of lowered taxation rates by the community residents and a possible loss of federal funds because of a shrinking "special target" population. These factors, combined with the existent "dry up" of new federal monies produce extreme hardships in the maintenance of existing educational programs. Consequently cost reduction related to diminished income is a cold reality facing most districts.

The districts which seem to be the hardest hit are "low wealth" (low assessed valuation per pupil) districts which frequently must rely heavily on state equalization and apportionments based on ADA or ADM. "High Wealth" districts (those which receive a greater proportion of funds from assessed valuation) will experience financial difficulties to a lesser degree when facing enrollment decline. A comparison of hypothetical district incomes of "high" and "low" wealth illustrates this fact.

District A (high wealth) and district B (low wealth) both decline in enrollment by 1,000 students. District A may lose at the rate of \$200 per pupil, yielding a loss of \$200,000. Whereas District B based heavily upon state equalization funding may lose at the rate of \$400 per pupil, yielding a loss of \$400,000. Each of these districts, however, would continue to receive approximately the same amount of money from local tax sources, although each could lose some federal monies if the enrollment decline contained students eligible for impacted aid assistance or other categorical federal aid.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Obviously, a careful cost-benefit analysis must be made when attempting to make a decision to close one or more facilities. Such a careful and thorough study is mandatory in order to properly and

correctly select the *one* facility which will be phased out. Such a cost-benefit analysis also has the beneficial effect of identifying for the administration and board of education those buildings operating either above or below the "average" efficiency of all of the facilities in the district.

Fixed costs of the district and/or individual buildings leave little room for cost reduction other than in the educational program, personnel, or facilities. Most administrators view facility contraction as the lesser of all evils. Before such actions can be taken, cost-analysis and building-by-building comparative studies must be accomplished.

The first major set of figures which must be compiled in anticipation of future decisions deals with the operating efficiency of buildings over the coming five to ten year period. These items are:

Capital Outlay: An analysis must be made of potential heavy expense items which may become necessary for a building within the next five to ten year period. Such items as the need for a new roof, replacement of the heating plant, mechanical equipment, inner wall reconstruction, replacement of window casements, and extensive painting either internally or externally. The critical question is how long can the building provide a healthful and safe environment. Just as critical is the determination of the cost of having this work done as well as the cost of delaying it until some future time.

Heat: Accurate figures should be accumulated well before decisions have to be made about the annual costs for energy to heat the buildings. The type of energy used should be considered in view of the changing natural resources available. Comparative costs of operating the individual buildings of the district should be compiled so that a decision might be made not only in terms of costs but type of energy used.

Electricity: Electrical systems in buildings need to be examined in terms of adequacy for continued use. Another question which needs to be faced is whether safety requirements will require work on the electrical systems. An accurate analysis of operational costs will indicate whether the power system presently used in any particular building is adequate or inefficient.

Insurance Costs: Frequently buildings within a district differ greatly in the insurance liability which they present. This usually is related to the type of construction, the age of the building, and the work which has taken place within the building in the past. The question, then, which must be asked is whether the insurance costs are exorbitant in relation to its age and the structure of the building.

Custodial Costs: An analysis must be made of the cost of daily custodial care in each of the buildings which might be affected. It is

a generally accepted precept that older buildings tend to cost more in terms of cleaning than newer buildings which are more uniform in their construction style.

Facilities: Facility contraction can take the form of school closure with subsequent sale of the building, or lease/rental of the facility. To "mothball" a facility allowing it to remain idle is the least desirable of all possibilities. Vacant buildings are open invitations to vandalism, rapid deterioration, and usually require increased insurance protection.

The decision between selling or leasing must be made by careful consideration to the future district needs. It would be disastrous to sell a building now and in five years suddenly discover it is again needed.

A third facility alternative is partial leasing. This arrangement is particularly effective in inner city areas. The practice of limiting school buildings only to school youth is not realistic in today's world.

Unused classroom space can be modified so as to enable the inclusion of offices for community service agencies. Urban area school buildings effectively provide space for the service needs of a community as well as the educational requirements.

Suburban school buildings are also being used by YMCA groups, senior citizens, day care centers and other recreation or service organizations while simultaneously operating educational programs. Daily interaction in a joint service facility provides students with the opportunities for acquiring the basic understandings of community living.

Revenue from segment leasing is frequently just enough to ease the high operating costs of a partial enrollment school and at the same time, provides a meaningful expansion of the traditional classroom by introducing other aspects of the community.

SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE SCHOOL TO BE CLOSED

The uniqueness of school districts precludes the listing of criteria in rank order. Each district will place its emphasis on some factors and not on others dependent upon community needs and desires.

Geographic location: A major concern for parents is that the new school, or receiving school, be relatively close to the old neighborhood; that in attending this new school children would not have to cross any major physical barriers (e.g. railroads, main arteries, parkways) and that at this new school there would be a relatively similar student population in terms of socio-economic background, racial, and ethnic make up as existed in the closed school. Obviously

transportation costs should be carefully examined when selecting one or more facilities for phase out.

Academic Excellence: Parents are not willing to let their children be moved from a "good academic performance" school to a school down the road with a "lesser academic" reputation. It is virtually impossible to close "the good school."

Present/Capacity Enrollment: It is logical to parents to see numbers presently enrolled as compared to the capacity of a school and understand that the building is under utilized. Hopefully, this school would be the smallest in the district, thereby affecting the fewest number of pupils. Unfortunately, given the above situation, experience has shown that the school is frequently in the most affluent section of the community . . . this presents another very real problem.

Facility Condition: The oldest building is again, a logical choice. It is probably the least flexible in terms of educational program (e.g. moving partitions, fully equipped classrooms, art rooms, labs) and is usually a costly building to maintain. Need for renovation is high as is the need for major capital outlay costs (e.g. roofing, black topping of play area, heating, plumbing, etc.).

Re-cycle Ability: Because of location some buildings are more desirable than others as prospective space for new tenants. A consideration that must be dealt with is the feasibility for resale or leasing of the building.

THE FACILITIES USAGE CRITERIA TEST

Closing this school would mean:

1. Keeping students relatively close to their neighborhood
2. Keeping students from crossing major physical barriers
3. Maintaining a similar socio-economic, racial, and ethnic mix
4. Closing the school with the lowest enrollment
5. Closing the oldest school with a weak academic performance record.
6. Closing the least educationally flexible building
7. Closing the "high cost" maintenance/capital outlay building
8. Closing a building that can be re-cycled
9. Closing the building that requires the least additional cost of district-wide transportation
10. Closing the building most in keeping with the recommendations of the Special Task Force.

If you can answer "yes" to each one of the above criteria, this probably is the school to be closed. Assign one point for a "yes" answer, and "0" for each "no" answer. This will give you an indica-

tion of one set of factors with which you may place in rank order the school buildings in your district.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Why conduct analysis of operating costs of separate school buildings when faced with an ultimate school closing?

Answer: In spite of the many arguments which come on an emotional and intellectual level about which buildings to close in any school phase out program, the eventual selection of buildings in part will relate to the operational costs of the specific buildings. In other words, what is the cost of keeping this building going, what continuing costs are to be maintained over a 10 year period, and what operational annual costs does the building have compared to other buildings. These concerns relate to the cost of keeping the building going on a daily, monthly, and annual basis and relate directly to annual budget allocations. These annual costs will ultimately figure largely in a final determination of which buildings should be maintained.

2. How should fuel and electricity usage studies be carried out in anticipation of any final determination?

Answer: The primary source of information about the costs of fuel and electricity are generally the local records of the school district. Administrators and financial officers should refer to the bills received during specified fiscal periods. Invariably, the utility bills are coded when sent to a school district business office so that the coding will reveal the building which has consumed the most fuel or electricity. The major consideration should be based upon the efficiency of previous utilization building by building. Should there be any further difficulty, the research offices of the various utility companies (telephone, electricity, gas, oil) may well be in a position to supply the necessary information.

3. Knowing the relative costs of various building operations, how does one determine their applicability to the problem of school building closing?

Answer: One of the more obvious determinants of whether a building can be afforded is the number of students which it might serve over a five to ten year period. Further criteria for analyzing its usefulness in a future period, is found in the opening of this chapter on facilities usage.

4. How can future roofing and painting needs be estimated when analyzing the future costs of individual buildings?

Answer: Many school districts have regular programs for resurfacing roofs and for painting buildings both internally and externally. These schedules should be referred to when trying to determine future costs over a five to ten year period. In the absence of such a systematic maintenance program, the school district might well engage consultants who are available to them or consult interested citizens in the community who are involved in various construction industries and might well represent the nucleus of a school building facilities subsection of a community task force related to school district closings.

5. Why is an inventory of materials necessary prior to redistricting or closing?

Answer: Equipment such as generators, kilns, and heavier types of instructional equipment (lathes, auto shop equipment, etc.) and maintenance equipment should be scheduled for purchase over a multiple year period. When it is obvious that some of these materials will not be needed due to school closings, such economies should be effected ahead of time.

6. What are the advantages of leasing unneeded school buildings?

Answer: It will always be there in case you need it again. Leasing is a logical move if the district has potential growth areas yet undeveloped, if zoning law revisions may change single dwelling areas into multiple dwelling unit areas, or if major urban renewal projects are possible in the future.

7. What are the disadvantages of leasing unneeded school buildings?

Answer: If a suitable tenant can be found, there are no real disadvantages.

8. What are the advantages of selling unneeded school buildings?

Answer: It brings in immediate revenue and may add that property to the school district tax rolls.

9. What are the disadvantages of selling unneeded school buildings?

Answer: Once the building has been sold, it is gone forever. Replacement, if needed in the future, may be financially prohibitive. For many districts, selling is the most logical solution; but

buyers are not easily secured. Many schools are located in residential areas where strict zoning ordinances limit commercial use.

10. What about partial leasing?

Answer: Of all the options, partial leasing of a building bringing joint occupancy of students with another segment of the community is not only economically sound, but educationally advantageous. It brings the children into direct contact through daily interaction with the out-of-school world in which they live. Senior citizen groups, day care centers, special education facilities, and social service agencies are naturals for cohabitation of a school building.

11. What criteria should be used for selecting the school to be closed?

Answer: Geographic location, present/capacity enrollment, condition of facility, re-cycle ability, academic excellence.

12. What about razing the building and selling the land?

Answer: If the building is situated on prime business property in a downtown area, or on valuable residential land it would be a logical solution. Care should be taken, however, to avoid emotional community reaction. One suggestion would be to provide in advance special places for plaques of honored war dead, cornerstones, or other meaningful memorabilia which may be in the closed building.

13. What suggestions can be offered for the future planning of new school facilities.

Answer: First and foremost, every effort should be made to build new facilities as flexible plants which can be easily recycled for other uses such as community or neighborhood centers. If at all possible, it would be wise to locate new school plants in commercially zoned areas allowing for a wider range of recycling options. Co-habitation by school children and other compatible partners (senior citizens, day care, pre-kindergarten, social service agencies) should be explored in the early planning stages. Not only the numbers, but the community's potential for growth over a 10-20 year period should be carefully analyzed before planning for a new facility. Examine the Keough Indicator Survey Scale factors and project them for 20 years. Will they describe the community?

14. What about inter-district sharing?

Answer: In theory, inter-district sharing is a viable solution to enrollment decline. However, in practice, it is difficult if not at times, impossible, to effect. If one community is experiencing decline, while its neighboring communities are in a period of growth, the logical conclusion would be a leasing plan. The major opposition is the desire of parents to keep their children close to home. Bussing children to the next town down the road is equal to sending them into our space. Parents of elementary children just won't do it. It would be far easier to go through a district re-organization of facility usage and bus older students to a neighboring district, than to bus elementary schoolers.

15. Is it possible for schools in one section of a school district to remain crowded while other neighborhoods are in decline?

Answer: Unfortunately, enrollment decline does not spread itself evenly over a community. Some sections will decline markedly while others will remain stable or even increase. This presents additional complications in terms of facility usage and even indicates redistricting or bussing requirements.

Appendix

KEOUGH INDICATOR SURVEY SCALE

1. Fewer (or no) problems with elementary school classes that are beyond your district's maximum class size guidelines. Are the days when extra students forced your schools to create classes on the auditorium stage, in halls, cafeteria and gym just so many memories?
2. Evidence that elementary class size in your district is quietly slipping from 30 to 35 down to 23 or 20.
3. Statistics that show a consistent decline (over two or three years) in the number of students at certain grade levels within some elementary schools. Are there, for example, considerably fewer fourth graders than seventh graders in your district, with gradual decline in the classes between?
4. Indications that school officials are concerned about preschool census figures that usually are considered quite reliable. You may begin to hear about alternatives (computerizing the census process, conducting a mail census, telephone surveys) to traditional census-taking methods. The list of alternatives gets longer as the indications of enrollment declines become more ominous.
5. Feedback from local realtors that reveals a marked decrease in the influx of families with preschool children and of young marrieds.
6. Requests from elementary school administrators who want to convert unused classrooms into resource centers and special help areas. Such requests often reflect the frustrations of administrators who have lived with crowded or overcrowded buildings and who now envision empty classrooms in their school buildings.
7. Clamoring for school tax relief because, the taxpayers say, decreasing numbers of students should warrant a lower school budget. Wrestling with this simplistic argument will provide you with yet another experience in boardmanship.

If any of these seven indicators of enrollment decline seem suspiciously familiar to you, ask your board to answer the following eight questions. If the board comes up with Yes answers to the

first three questions and No answers to questions four through eight, your next district project might well be the development of a contingency plan to prepare citizens for the often severe shock of school closings and consolidations.

1. Is your community close to a metropolitan area and did your community develop and grow as a result of population expansion in that metropolitan area?
2. Is your community one with expensive houses that continue to escalate in price disproportionately to general real estate values?
3. Does your community contain a high percentage of professional people or older people whose homes fulfill their lifetime needs and whose children are now in (or have been through) the local schools?
4. If your community has a highly reputed school system, will that good reputation draw in young families in spite of high-priced houses?
5. Does your community have a high level of mobility, with families moving in and out? (And who's moving in — families with children or retirees?)
6. Does your community contain pockets of middle-income housing that will attract young couples and families with small children?
7. Is there still land available in your community for future residential development?
8. Have service organizations (Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., community clubs for children, religious groups) been maintaining an emphasis on programs for children of elementary school age? If not, is the decreasing emphasis because of diminishing numbers of children to be served?

ENROLLMENT PREDICTION CHARTS

I

Birth Rate		1st Grade Enrollment		Enrollment Ratio of Birth Rate
1964		1970-1971		
1965		1971-1972		
1966		1972-1973		
1967		1973-1974		
1968		1974-1975		
Total of Ratios Divide by 5 Average Ratio				

II

Birth Rate			Projected 1st Grade Enrollment	For years
1969		X Average Ratio =		1975-76
1970		"		1976-77
1971		"		1977-78
1972		"		1978-79
1973		"		1979-80

Year	Enrollment by Grade											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1964-65												
1965-66												
1966-67												
1967-68												
1968-69												
Total by Gr.												
Divide by 5												
Divide Grades		$\frac{2}{1}$	$\frac{3}{2}$	$\frac{4}{3}$	$\frac{5}{4}$	$\frac{6}{5}$	$\frac{7}{6}$	$\frac{8}{7}$	$\frac{9}{8}$	$\frac{10}{9}$	$\frac{11}{10}$	$\frac{12}{11}$
Retention Ratio												
P 1975-76												
R												
O 1976-77												
J												
E 1977-78												
C												
T 1978-79												
E												
D 1979-80												
E												
N 1980-81												
R												
O 1981-82												
L												
L 1982-83												
M												
E 1983-84												
N												
T 1984-85												

Instructions

- I**
 - 1. Fill in birth rate
 - 2. Fill in 1st Grade enrollment
 - 3. Do necessary calculations to find average ratio

- II**
 - 1. Fill in birth rate
 - 2. Multiply by Average Ratio

- III**
 - 1. Fill in enrollment data
 - 2. Do necessary calculations to find retention ratio
 - 3. Fill Projected 1st Grade Enrollment from II into appropriate columns of III.
 - 4. Multiply enrollment for a specific year & class by the retention ratio for the *next* class. Result is the predicted enrollment for that year, next class.
 - 5. Complete Chart.

SCHOOL-CLOSING CHECKLIST

Community Task Forces on Long-Range Planning

Long before there are obvious indications of dwindling enrollment — have you set up Community Task Forces to study pupil population and to recommend school closings?

Are the Task Forces broadly-based and representative?

Are all interested groups represented on the Task Forces?

Are community leaders (of church, civic and political groups) involved in the Task Forces?

Are there staff representatives on the Task Forces?

Have you publicized the findings of the Task Forces?

Have recommendations to close school originated with the Community Task Forces?

An alternative is a district-wide poll, preferably
by an independent agency.

Parent, Teacher & Student Association

Have you maintained channels of communication between the PTAs of the buildings concerned?

Have the parents from the concerned schools attended each other's PTA meetings? Have the leaders been cross-introduced?

Have you established a Central PTA Council so that there has been a sharing of ideas, personnel, aspirations, long-range plans?

Have you sponsored kaffeeklatches between the PTA leaders?

Professional Staff

Principals

Have you set up professional meetings between the concerned principals?

Have you arranged for the "new" Principal to see the "other School's" teachers operating in their own milieu?

Teachers

Have you provided for intervisitations and cross-observations?

Have you set up district-wide staff meetings?

Special Teachers

Have you provided for separate meetings between art, music, P.E., reading and other specialists and the "new" teachers?

The Media

Have you informed the press of closing, etc., at the earliest opportunity? Have you kept them advised, step-by-step of all procedures? Remember school closings are emotional and they are hot news for a local paper. These papers can be your staunchest allies.

In General

Have you established a standardized testing program and a standardized cumulative information file (or folder) which can provide interschool continuity?

Have you given yourself all the lead time you'll need? Have you started staff and community adjusting to the idea of possible school closings years in advance of such closings?

Some Cautions

Of course you've considered the racial mix, but have you considered religious, socio-economic and other factors?

Will the pupils attending the "new" schools have to cross any major traffic arteries, or encounter any traffic hazard?

**Bedford Public Schools
Bedford, Massachusetts 01730**

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

TRANSFERS AND POSITION PLACEMENT FOR 1974-75

This notice deals specifically with faculty members in elementary classroom teaching situations; because of the importance of it all, however, the notice is going to all staff members. This morning it was my distinct displeasure to announce to twelve staff members that their services would not be required during the next school year **DUE TO THE DECLINE IN THE NUMBER OF TEACHING POSITIONS AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL.**

This situation has been generated not only by the decline in elementary enrollment but by the past practice of granting Leaves of Absence. For example, there are presently four staff members on Leave (other than Maternity) for whom positions must be reserved in the 1974-75 school year. In addition, the elementary teaching staff has been reduced by four positions.

At the present time there are no known retirements this June nor have any staff members other than first year personnel expressed any plans for leaving the system's employment.

Frankly speaking, the system is at a point where twelve "first year" personnel have received dismissal letters in accord with the legal requirement that such letters be received by April 15. We know that we have perhaps four openings and we hope that further developments might alleviate the circumstances of the dismissal procedures mentioned above.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN

1. Any elementary staff members who desire transfers during the next school year should state their interest to the superintendent's Office in writing within the next ten days (before April 25).
2. In the absence of transfer requests it may be necessary to transfer "involuntarily" one or two tenured staff members. (Presently there are four 6th grade teachers at Lane, with only three positions in the next year. A similar situation exists at the 3rd grade level at Davis.) This process must take place, if necessary, prior to May 15.
3. The above steps are specified in Article 12 of the School Committee/Teacher Association contract. When these steps have

been taken administrative decisions will be required to fill the balance of the openings. It is my hope that such openings may be filled with qualified personnel from among those who have been "excessed."

While meeting with the excessed teachers this morning, I pointed out to them that the Superintendent's Office will lend as much support as possible to any efforts they make in seeking employment. At this point, I would urge any staff members who are anticipating retirement, family relocation, or any other cause for cessation or disruption of employment to be in touch with me. Such information, if made available to me, will help to ease some of the anxieties which our younger colleagues are experiencing at this point.

KNOWN OPENINGS FOR STAFF MEMBERS ELIGIBLE FOR TRANSFER

Page School: Grade 3, Grade 5, Grade 6
Lane School: Grade 3 (2)
Center School: Grade 5
Davis School: Grade 5, Grade 6 (2)

William A. Keough, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

EARLY RETIREMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Pasadena Unified School District

The Pasadena Early Retirement Incentive Program was designed to help solve the problem of declining enrollments and to save the district money by encouraging those at the maximum salary to retire early.

The specific components of the program:

1. The person must have served satisfactorily for a minimum of 10 years with the Pasadena Unified School District.
2. The person must be currently earning \$11,194 or more. (People on leave or on part-time assignments would not be eligible.)
3. The person has to be 50 years of age or older.
4. The person selecting the program would serve a maximum of 20 days per year at activities mutually agreed upon. These activities varied with the individuals but in general included:
 - a. Demonstration teaching.
 - b. Working on staff development and in-service programs.
 - c. Helping with testing programs.
 - d. Compiling test data as it relates to Reading and Math Profiles.
 - e. Orienting and providing aid to new teachers.
 - f. Designing and producing programs for the closed circuit TV station.
 - g. Updating curriculum guides and other learning materials.
(Substitute teaching was not included.)
5. The person selecting Early Retirement would be on a contract as a Consultant for a period of 5 years or to age 65 whichever came first.
6. The person would be eligible to maintain the Medical Insurance Plan currently held. (This was Ross Loos and Blue Cross, but did not include Vision or Dental Programs available to district employees.)
7. The annual compensation for Consultants under this program would range from \$2500 to \$4000 based upon the following schedule:

Amount Presently Earned	Early Retirement Incentive Plan
\$11,194 — 11,619	\$2500
11,620 — 12,045	2600
12,046 — 12,805	2750
12,806 — 13,565	3000
13,566 — 14,325	3250
14,326 — 15,085	3500
15,086 — 15,839	3750
15,840 or over	4000

Prior to September, 1972 Pasadena had 33 teachers and administrators accept the program and it was determined that the district saved \$105,000 by either not filling those positions or hiring people at the bottom of the salary schedule.

Ramon C. Cortines, Superintendent of Schools,
Pasadena Unified School District

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDY THE CLOSING OF SMALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Name of School

I Growth Trends

A. What was the October enrollment (do not include special education in any enrollment reporting) for the following school years?

(1971-72) October, 1971

(1972-73) October, 1972

(1973-74) October, 1973

B. What is the present enrollment? (May, 1974)

C. What is the projected enrollment for next year? (October, 1974)

D. What is the actual increase or decrease in enrollment from 1971-72 (October, 1971) to the present? (May 1, 1974)

E. Please list the significant reasons why there has been an increase or decrease in enrollment.

II Proximity and Availability of Rooms at Nearby Schools

A. If your school were to be closed, to what school could these children be sent?

B. How many classrooms are available at the receiving school?

C. Would it be feasible to place portables at the receiving school? Yes No How many?

D. If your school were closed, what would be the projected enrollment at the receiving school or schools for the school year 1975-76?

- E. How adequate are the multipurpose room and other service facilities at the receiving school?

Comments:

III Ethnic Balance

- A. What is the ethnic composition of this school? (Express in total number)

Spanish Surname	Oriental
Other White	American Indian
Negro American	Other Non-White

- B. What is the ethnic composition of the receiving school? (Express in number)

Spanish Surname	Oriental
Other White	American Indian
Negro American	Other Non-White

- C. Will the combined enrollment of the schools being considered in this transfer of students contribute adversely to ethnic imbalance? Yes No How?

- D. Other factors to be considered:

IV Transportation

- A. Is it feasible for the children to walk to the new receiving school? Yes No

Comments:

- B. Will crossing guards be needed? Yes No
How many?

- C. What is the distance in miles (to the nearest tenth of a mile) to the receiving school?

D. How many children will need to be transported to the receiving school?

E. On the basis of the answers supplied in the above questions, A, B, C, and D, what would be the probable cost to bus the students?

F. Other factors to be considered.

Comments:

V Safety

A. If the children were to walk to the new receiving school, list dangerous safety factors which need to be considered.

B. Other safety factors to be considered.

VI Special Education Classes

A. Are there any special education classes housed at this school?

Yes	No	How Many?	Kind?
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B. Are there any special education classes housed at the receiving school?

Yes	No	How Many?	Kind?
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C. Where could these special classes be moved?

Comments:

D. Other factors to be considered.

VII Disposition of Closed Schools

A. What is the age of this school?

B. How functional is the building and other facilities?

Comments:

- C. Do you have any suggestions on how this school could be used if we were to close it?

Comments:

- D. Other factors to be considered.

VIII Total Administrative Cost of the School Per Child

- A. Principal's Salary
- B. Secretary's Salary
- C. Custodian's Salary
- D. Noon Duty Supervisors
- E. Other
- F. Unit Cost Per Child

(Total Salaries divided by enrollment without special education classes)

IX Community Reaction

- A. What do you consider would be the community reaction to closing this school?

Comments:

X Probable Financial Savings

- A. Salaries of Non-teaching Personnel
- B. Utilities
- C. Plant Maintenance
- D. Grounds Maintenance
- E. Transportation — Would there be a savings or an increased cost?

Comments:

- F. Other factors to be considered in financial savings.

Source: Operations Notebook 3, Planning for Declining Enrollment, published by Association of California School Administrators, May 1978.